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On Establiſhments in Religion, and Religious Liberty.

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SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

ON

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 1792.

BEING THE

COMMENCEMENT-SUNDAY.

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BY

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1798.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

THE HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

SHUTE,

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE

IS INSCRIBED

IN TESTIMONY OF THE GRATITUDE AND RESPECT

OF THE

AUTHOR.

A

SERMON, &c.

GAL. v. 1.

STAND FAST THEREFORE IN THE LIBERTY WHEREWITH CHRIST HATH MADE US FREE; AND BE NOT ENTANGLED AGAIN WITH THE YOKE OF BONDAGE.

THE deſign of Saint PAUL in this epiſtle is to diſſuade the Galatians from ſubjecting themſelves to the ceremonial law of the Jews. He informs them, that both Jews and Gentiles were in bondage; the Jews to the law, the Gentiles to falſe Gods: till, in the fulneſs of time, when the world was prepared to receive a pure and perfect inſtitution of religion, they were called by JESUS CHRIST to the glorious liberty of the ſons of GOD. He then exhorts the Galatians, that having been freed from the dominion of ſinful paſſions, and from the idolatrous worſhip of falſe Gods, to which as Gentiles they had been formerly ſubject,

they would continue ſtedfaſt in the liberty of the Goſpel, and not enſlave themſelves again by ſubmitting to the ceremonial law of the Jews, which had now anſwered the ends of it's inſtitution.

Without further reſpect to the particular occaſion of theſe words, I ſhall conſider the nature of religious liberty in general, and point out the manifeſt diſtinction between thoſe principles, on which the reformers of our religion vindicated the rights of private judgment from the undue uſurpation of human authority, and that flagrant abuſe and miſapplication of thoſe principles, by which others, under the inſinuating pretence of aſſerting their Chriſtian liberty, maintain doctrines ſubverſive of all eſtabliſhments, of all order in religion, and, in the end, of thoſe rights of liberty, which they profeſs to ſupport.

The liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free may, in general, be defined to conſiſt in a power of doing whatever is permitted by the laws of the Goſpel, and of not being compelled to practiſe, or to profeſs the belief of, any thing, which we think inconſiſtent with the faith and doctrines there dilivered. Whatever contradicts or ſuperſedes the preſcriptions of a divine law no human power can enjoin, without uſurping the authority of the divine Lawgiver, to whom all Chriſtians are under a prior and ſuperior obligation*. But to ſuppoſe, that the religious liberty, to which we are reſtored by the Goſpel of CHRIST, includes in it a diſcharge from all reſtraints of human authority in matters of

* Hooker, Book III. ſ. 9.

of religion, is a manifeſt abuſe of that privilege, deſtructive of it's own deſign and purpoſe; being inconſiſtent with all order and polity, and ſubverſive of the nature and end of ſocial union, by which the faith and doctrines of that Goſpel of liberty are ſecured and promoted.

It is the firſt public concern of every well regulated government to eſtabliſh religion, as neceſſarily and inſeparably connected with the ſupport and exiſtence of the civil eſtabliſhment*. It is no leſs evident, that protection and encouragement afforded by the civil power is equally conducive to the advancement of true religion. Without diſcuſſing the queſtion of an alliance between Church and State, by a formal convention and compact for mutual ſupport and defence, it is certain in fact, that they communicate to each other advantages, different in their nature, and tendency, but directed to their reſpective intereſts, the promotion of the ends of ſocial life, and the preſervation of the religion and morals of the people.

The principal advantage, derived to religion, ariſes from that neceſſary proviſion, made by the ſtate, for public inſtruction, and the regular celebration of Chriſtian worſhip; without which, it is juſtly apprehended, mankind would ſoon fall into a total ignorance and neglect of all religion §. Moſt Chriſtian nations have agreed upon the expediency of making a permanent proviſion

* Hooker, Book V. ſ. 1.

§ Wollaſton's Religion of Nature, p. 124. Butler's Analogy, p. 215.

viſion for thoſe, who, ſecluded from all ſecular employments, are engaged in performing the offices of religion. If it is impoſſible or inexpedient to extend this proviſion to the various ſects, into which a ſociety may be divided, it follows, that a preference muſt be given by law to ſome particular ſect. Every principle of good policy and juſtice requires, that this ſhould be accompanied with a toleration of other ſects, unlimited, as far as it is applied to the exerciſe of their religion, to liberty of conſcience, and the rights of private judgment, and as far as their religious opinions and practice are conſiſtent with the ſafety of the ſtate. The promotion of *true* religion being the end propoſed, the principles of all Chriſtian religious eſtabliſhments muſt be founded on the principles of the Goſpel. The authority of religion is not made to reſt upon the weak foundation of human authority; but it's eſtabliſhment is the method by which mankind, as members of civil ſociety, openly declare and ſupport the ſupreme authority of divine revelation; in order to publiſh more effectually the laws of religion, and procure them a better and more univerſal reception among mankind.

Without being liable to the imputation of making religion an engine of the ſtate, we may affirm, that, in return for the protection it receives, religion communicates to the ſtate ſecurity and ſupport, by improving the morals of the people, by extending it's influence to all the duties of ſocial life, by enforcing many virtues, which are not the objects of human laws, and by impreſſing

ſing the minds of men with a firm perſuaſion, that their condition hereafter depends upon their conduct here. As human laws are from their very nature confined to the external deportment of men, the execution of them may be eluded. The obligations of gratitude, charity, and many other virtues of a moral nature, apply to ſuch a variety of caſes, and in ſuch different circumſtances, that it is impoſſible previouſly to aſcertain their limits, and provide for their obſervance, in any ſyſtem of human policy. Religion ſupplies theſe defects, by implanting a real principle of virtue in the heart, by correcting the inward frame of the mind, and by influencing the moral conduct from the convictions of conſcience, and a ſenſe of the divine authority.

The chief end of religion, having reſpect to the ſpiritual concerns of mankind, and their ſalvation in a future ſtate, the means of eſtabliſhing and ſupporting it are alſo different from that coercive power, which is neceſſary to ſecure the benefits of civil ſociety. But yet it is evident, that every religious ſociety, inſtituted for the attainment of eternal life by the preſervation and advancement of true religion, ſtill enjoys the ſame right, which other ſocieties poſſeſs, of ſecuring the ends of it's inſtitution by all lawful means; and conſequently of preſcribing ſuch terms of communion, as appear beſt calculated for the promotion of true religion; provided that nothing be required under this

pretence, which is contrary to the word of God*. But it is objected, that eſtabliſhed confeſſions, while they profeſs to ordain nothing but what is agreeable to the word of God, yet in effect interfere with the liberty of private judgment, and the right

* To this general poſition, on which the right claimed by Proteſtant Churches has been founded and juſtified, it has been anſwered, (Confeſſional, Chap, II. p. 22, 23.) "That, by admitting the principle of ſelf-defence, and ſelf-preſervation in matters of religion, all the perſecutions of the Heathens againſt the Chriſtians, and even the Popiſh Inquiſition may be juſtified."—'If the Church of England, for example, has a right to fix her own terms of communion, and, in conſequence of that, to ſecure the obedience of her members by temporal rewards and penalties; the Church of Portugal muſt, upon the ſame principles, have an equal right to ſecure herſelf, by the diſcipline of an *holy office*, or how otherwiſe ſhe thinks proper.'—An objection, which, in other words amounts to this,—that becauſe ſome Churches have abuſed their authority, to the purpoſes of an illegal, oppreſſive, and unchriſtian tyranny, therefore the claim of a right to preſcribe, by *legal* methods, modes of worſhip *agreeable* to the ſcriptures, cannot be juſtified.—And, in the ſame manner we might conclude, that, becauſe civil government is liable to be abuſed, therefore mankind ſhall give up the benefits of ſociety, and all government ſhall be diſſolved.—We muſt obſerve, that, in order to arrive at his concluſion, the author has artfully omitted that very circumſtance, which is eſſentially connected with the right of eſtabliſhing any terms of communion at all; and which, when duly obſerved, is ſufficient to prevent any abuſes, that may attend it; namely, the proviſo, that "lawful means be uſed; and that nothing be required which is contrary to the word of God."—A ſuppoſition ſo neceſſary to be attended to, that the eſtabliſhment of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures is, in fact, the very end propoſed; and the ordinances, preſcribed by the Church, the means of promoting that end more effectually. Agreeably to this, our own Church declares (Art. 6.) That "Holy Scripture containeth all things neceſſary to ſalvation: ſo that whatſoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it ſhould be believed as an article of faith." (Art. 20.) That "it is not lawful to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's written word." Let theſe neceſſary ſuppoſitions be carried along with the author's argument, and his concluſion will ſtand thus;—The Church of England has a right to ſecure the ends of it's inſtitution, namely, the eſtabliſhment of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, by all lawful means:—therefore the Church of Portugal, or any other Church, has an equal right to ſecure itſelf, by any means it thinks proper; whether they be lawful or unlawful, ſcriptural or unſcriptural: a method of reaſoning, which cannot well be defended, without at the ſame time maintaining, that lawful and unlawful means, ſcriptural and unſcriptural doctrines, are one and the ſame thing.

right, which belongs to every Chriſtian, of ſearching the ſcriptures, and determining for himſelf.

The fallacy of this objection conſiſts in the deduction of general conſequences from a truth of indubitable certainty in a limited ſenſe, and the indiſcriminate application of it to caſes, in which it is not concluſive.

The ſame propoſition which is true, when applied to men in their individual capacity, may be entirely falſe, when applied to them as members of a viſible ſociety of Chriſtians, in which ariſe various obligations of a ſocial and relative nature. *For, as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the ſame office: ſo we, being many, are one body in* CHRIST, *and every one members one of another**. The Author of our religion, having communicated to mankind a ſyſtem of divine laws, confirmed at firſt by miraculous powers, for the converſion of the world, has been pleaſed alſo to aſſociate his diſciples in a viſible community†, diſtinguiſhed by inſtituted forms of religion, founded on theſe laws, in order to propagate and continue them throughout all ſucceeding ages. The primary intention of religion is to regulate the faith and practice of men, to train them up in piety and virtue, to improve the inward diſpoſitions of the mind, and qualify them for a more perfect ſtate of exiſtence. Subſervient to theſe ends a viſible ſociety is inſtituted, preſcribing ſuch external ordinances as

* Rom. xii. 4, 5.

† Hooker, Book III. ſ. 1. Moſheimii de Rebus Chriſtianis Comment. Sæc. 1. c. v. and note. Alſo, c. xvii. and xli.

as may beſt promote decency, peace, and edification; and the performance of ſuch outward acts, as are the proper expreſſions of thoſe inward diſpoſitions of mind which Chriſtianity inculcates. The very exiſtence of ſuch a ſociety requires a viſible and external obedience of all it's members to ſome rule of action. The injunctions of that revelation, by which every Chriſtian in his private capacity profeſſes to be governed, together with ſuch other matters of diſcretion, as are neceſſary to their ſocial condition, and, likewiſe agreeable to revelation, are preſcribed by the public laws of that ſociety, as conditions of union between the members of it. Every private Chriſtian is now bound to comply with theſe terms of union; and his obedience becomes one of thoſe relative duties, for the tranſgreſſion of which he is reſponſible to the laws of the ſociety, of which he is a member: whoſe authority he conſiders as limited by the laws of the religion, which it is intended to promote,—that *goſpel of liberty wherewith* CHRIST himſelf *hath made us free**.

One

* Confeſſional, p. 23. "The proviſo, that *Church ordinances be agreeable to the word of God*, will not in the preſent caſe help the Proteſtant Church at all. Eſtabliſhed confeſſions, being human compoſitions, muſt either be ſubject to examination by the private judgment of thoſe, who profeſs (as all Proteſtants do) to make the written word their only rule of religion; or elſe the Church muſt claim a right of interpreting the ſcriptures for all her members, excluſive of the right of private judgment. The former of theſe principles manifeſtly precludes the right of the Church to eſtabliſh *any thing*, as a condition of Chriſtian communion, without the previous conſent of all her members; which in a large ſociety would be impoſſible to be obtained. The latter indeed veſts the Church with a full meaſure of authority to eſtabliſh what ſhe pleaſes; but then it is an authority which every Proteſtant Church moſt expreſsly diſclaims." There is another ſuppoſition, by which, both the authority of the Church, and the rights of private judgment may be vindicated. Let us conſider, how the private liberty of individuals

One end of the inſtitution of a viſible religious ſociety is, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *for the edifying of the body of Chriſt* *, for the

viduals is ſecured in civil ſociety. It being impracticable there, as well as in religious ſocieties, for the collective body of the people to aſſiſt in framing the laws, by which they are to be governed, every man that enters into ſociety, reſigns up that power, which he enjoyed perſonally in a ſtate of nature, into the hands of the community; yet the natural rights and privileges, which each individual exerciſed perſonally for himſelf in a ſtate of nature, are not therefore deſtroyed; but rather confined within certain limits for their more effectual ſecurity. And this end is thought to be fully anſwered, while the powers, to which they are intruſted, only obſerve the general rule of acting agreeably to the public good of the ſociety, and the ends of its inſtitution.

The caſe is the ſame in a ſociety of men, who, for the more effectual promotion of true religion, agree to live together in the ſocial obſervance of the laws of the goſpel. If it ſhould ſtill be objected, that this caſe is not applicable to religion; that obedience, as an internal act of the mind, is ſubmitted to God alone, and incapable of being directed by human authority; in addition to the diſtinction already made of men as individuals, and as members of a viſible ſociety, it may be anſwered in the words of a judicious writer, "That religion, as it ſignifies internal acts of the mind, faith, devotion, reverence, and love of God, and ſubmiſſion to his will, &c. is a matter purely perſonal, tranſacted immediately, and only, between God and the ſoul. But ſo alſo are juſtice, temperance, charity and other moral virtues: theſe in their *proper* notion, are acts, habits, and diſpoſitions of the mind; and, as ſuch, are no more ſubject to human authority, than the internal acts of religion. But then thoſe outward actions, which are preſumptive evidences of ſuch inward diſpoſitions of mind, are under human cognizance, and proper ſubjects of human laws. It is certainly to be wiſhed, that in every ſociety, all the members had theſe internal diſpoſitions. But as they can by no other moral means be infuſed into them, than by arguments, perſuaſion, and convictions of their judgment, all that civil power can do with regard to them, is making proviſions for education and inſtruction, appointing fit perſons to thoſe offices, and requiring a due diſcharge of them. But the outward actions expreſſive of theſe diſpoſitions, are within the reach and inſpection of civil authority, and a proper matter of ſocial laws. Theſe outward actions have obtained the name of thoſe inward principles and diſpoſitions, from which they are preſumed to flow. So acts of juſtice or charity are called by the name of thoſe virtues; acts of worſhip, and profeſſions of faith, &c. religion. In this ſenſe the word is always uſed, when we ſpeak of particular religions, as the Chriſtian, Mahometan, &c. The idea is compoſed of their profeſſions of faith, modes of worſhip, &c. ſuch outward acts, as are apparent to men. And in this ſenſe it is, that we affirm religion to be a proper ſubject of human laws, and not as it is an internal inviſible principle, a thought cognizable only by GOD." Vindication of the Civil eſtabliſhment of Religion. By J. Rogers, D. D. p. 39, &c.

* Eph. iv. 11. *And he gave ſome, apoſtles; and ſome, prophets; and ſome, evangeliſts;*

the better preſervation and communication of religious knowledge and practice. Inſtruction, admonition, and exhortation, are the lawful means of promoting religion. It was thus our SAVIOUR introduced and propagated the religion of the Goſpel, which by it's own light and evidence ſoon prevailed over all the rage of perſecution, and the moſt inveterate prejudices and paſſions of mankind. It was thus the Apoſtles endeavoured, *only by the manifeſtation of the truth, to commend themſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of* GOD.

Outward violence and compulſion may influence the external behaviour, but can never reach the heart. It cannot make a ſincere Chriſtian, or be effectual to the attainment of eternal life. Inſtruction then being the lawful method of promoting religion, it follows, that a Chriſtian ſociety, inſtituted for ſecuring the faith and doctrines of the Goſpel, has a right to examine into the opinions of thoſe, who are to perform the office of teaching, to diſcover and aſcertain the ſenſe in which they underſtand the words of ſcripture, and to require a ſufficient aſſurance that they will deliver them pure and uncorrupted to the people. And this is required, not as a law to over-rule the liberty of private judgment, to compel them to aſſent to any ſenſe of ſcripture, which they are perſuaded is not the true ſenſe; but as a teſt to

liſts; and ſome, paſtors and teachers: (12) *For the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry; for the edifying of the body of Chriſt:* (13) *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.*

to diſcover, whether that ſenſe of ſcripture, to which their private judgment may have led them, is the true and genuine ſenſe, and ſuch as ought to qualify them to be appointed public teachers.

With regard to other Chriſtians, there is no doubt, but that the doctrines directed to be taught are ſuch as are judged proper for them to believe and practiſe, as agreeable to the true interpretation of ſcripture. But yet, after ſufficient care is taken for their inſtruction in what is deemed the true religion of Chriſt, they are left to the dictates of their own underſtandings to determine, whether they can receive it as ſuch. Toleration, indulgence, and protection are due to their religious perſuaſions, as far as they are conſiſtent with the ſecurity, peace, and welfare of ſociety.

But ſecurity, and protection, in the profeſſion and exerciſe of religion, do not, in the opinion of ſome, amount to a complete toleration, without an indiſcriminate admiſſion of every ſect to civil offices of truſt and emolument. The determination of this queſtion does not depend upon partial and private conſiderations, but upon the general tendency of the meaſure. Every community has a right to impoſe ſuch limitations and reſtraints on the privileges of individuals, as are conducive to the public happineſs, and general welfare of the ſociety at large; to determine by what qualifications the various ranks and orders of the ſtate ſhall be diſtinguiſhed, and what conditions and qualities ſhall be required

quired of thoſe, who are to perform the neceſſary functions of each. Reſtraints of individuals, for public convenience, do really increaſe the happineſs and liberty of the community in general, the members of which, by the ſupport of that conſtitution, which ſecures to them every thing valuable in ſociety, receive more in addition to their civil liberty, than they loſe by the diminution of thoſe private rights and privileges, which are ſubmitted to the public direction. Civil incapacities and reſtraints, impoſed by law, are not then neceſſarily *evils*, they are not *puniſhments*, they are not *perſecution*; but they are ſalutary proviſions, made without ſuppoſition of any fault or tranſgreſſion of any member of the community, for the more effectual ſecurity of the benefits of civil union *. The only queſtion here to be conſidered is the effect to be produced; the expediency of which determines the right of excluding from civil offices. For reſtraints without any reaſon, or any good end to be anſwered, are needleſs and unwarrantable violations of natural liberty.

It

* (Biſhop of Landaff's Charge to his Clergy in June, 1791, p. 11, 12.) "An excluſion from civil offices is perſecution; it is not, indeed, the perſecution of the Inquiſition, or of Smithfield; it differs from them in degree, but it reſembles them in kind. I have argued myſelf into this opinion in the following manner:—Puniſhment for religious opinions is perſecution; and evil of any kind inflicted by the authority of the civil magiſtrate, is puniſhment. This evil may reſpect a man's perſon, or liberty, or property, or character. Civil incapacity, brought upon men by law, is an evil affecting their property, and their character; their character, as it expoſes them to the imputation of being bad citizens; their property, as it takes from them the poſſibility of acquiring advantages attendant on certain civil offices. Theſe advantages, whether they conſiſt of wealth, power,

It may be laid down in general, that religious perſuaſions, inconſiſtent with the ſafety of the ſtate, or incompatible with the

power, influence, or honour, are worth ſomething; their value may be variouſly appreciated; yet being worth ſomething, the poſſibility of acquiring them is worth ſomething, and the taking away from any man that poſſibility on account of his religion is perſecution."

This argument is propoſed in very general terms; and his Lordſhip's acknowledged judgment and abilities muſt undoubtedly have led him to apply it in ſome ſenſe in which it is concluſive. It is only to be lamented, that he has not reſtrained it within ſuch limitations, as are neceſſary to prevent a miſapplication by thoſe who have leſs diſcernment. For very few propoſitions, applicable to human affairs, can be ſecurely aſſented to without many reſtrictions: and the ſame concluſions, which are true with regard to men in certain ſituations, may be entirely falſe, when applied to them as placed under different relations. *Civil incapacity, brought upon men by law, is an evil affecting their property and their character.* This conſidered in itſelf, abſtracted from any beneficial end and tendency, may in ſome ſenſe be true; but, conſidered with relation to the production of a general good, and the promotion of the ends for which men entered into ſociety, it ceaſes to be an evil. All laws impoſe ſome reſtraint or incapacity on individuals, and the right of impoſing them is determined by the expediency. The ſtatutes which enact, that no perſon ſhall be capable of ſitting or voting in the Houſe of Commons, unleſs he have an eſtate of a certain value; and thoſe, which exclude all from voting for a member to ſerve in parliament without certain qualifications, are reſtraints and incapacities, juſtified by the beneficial tendency of ſuch laws, in excluding thoſe whoſe ſituations are not ſuppoſed independent. It cannot then be affirmed in general, that *civil incapacity is an evil; and that evil of any kind, inflicted by the authority of the civil magiſtrate, is puniſhment.*

Perhaps this reaſoning is intended to be confined to incapacities on account of religion. By the act for the *further limitation of the crown*, it is enacted, (12 and 13. W. III. c. 2. ſ. 3.) "That whoſoever ſhall hereafter come to the poſſeſſion of this crown ſhall join in communion with the Church of England, as by law eſtabliſhed." Here is an incapacity on account of religion, to which the terms of the argument above cited are totally inapplicable. Becauſe the tendency to promote the public happineſs of the community, which has been here laid down as the principle on which all legal reſtraints are founded, never obtained more eminently than in that act of ſettlement, which limited the crown to the Proteſtant deſcendents of the Houſe of Hanover, and further (ſ. 4.) "ratified and confirmed the eſtabliſhed religion, and the rights and liberties of the people." If it is juſtifiable and expedient to limit the chief magiſtrate himſelf to the condition of joining in communion with the eſtabliſhed Church, it is alſo juſtifiable to impoſe ſimilar reſtraints on thoſe, who are to be admitted to the inferior offices of truſt and power in the ſtate.

the duties neceſſary for it's preſervation; that religious opinions, not immediately dangerous in themſelves, if neceſſarily connected, or uſually accompanied with political opinions, hoſtile to the eſtabliſhed form of government, are ſufficient reaſons for an excluſion from civil offices. That ſuch religious tenets, for inſtance, as are uniformly profeſſed by the advocates of deſpotiſm, and ſuch as are invariably held by the favourers of a republican ſtate, juſtify a legiſlature, which would maintain the ſafety and welfare of a mixed government, in excluding from confidence, and places of truſt, thoſe who would ſubvert it; tolerating at the ſame time their opinions, as far as they are merely religious.

It is our happineſs to profeſs a religion, in which the eſtabliſhment of the doctrines of the holy ſcriptures is the end propoſed, and the ordinances preſcribed only the means of promoting that

Before we veſt a *property* in civil offices, (Bp. Landaff's Charge, p. 12.) or precipitately conclude, that thoſe, who do not chuſe to comply with the conditions required by law, are deprived of the *rights of citizens* (p. 14.), it ſeems, that ſome intermediate ſteps ſhould intervene; that ſome deduction ſhould be made, or ſome reaſoning offered, on the ends of government, the rights of perſons and things, and the means of acquiring and loſing them. If the ſubmiſſion of private right to public utility be neceſſary to ſecure the benefits, and alſo agreeable to the principles of all political ſocieties, the legiſlature of every community muſt have a right to diſtinguiſh, by marks of favour and confidence, thoſe, whoſe principles give the beſt ſecurity of their allegiance and fidelity, and are moſt conducive to the welfare and peace of the public. Every man in the management of his private concerns claims a right of employing thoſe, whom he thinks beſt qualified for his ſervice by their principles, their honeſty, their virtues, or religious perſuaſions, without being liable to the imputation of depriving others, who in his opinion are not ſo qualified, of a *right* or *property*, *by taking from them the poſſibility of acquiring advantages attendant on his ſervice*. The right, which every ſubject may claim in a ſociety, is protection. Rewards, privileges, and immunities are free and diſcretionary donations, to be determined by conſiderations of prudence, expediency, and public utility.

that end more effectually. And as our religious eſtabliſhment profeſſes to regulate it's doctrines by the holy ſcriptures alone; ſo, in determining the true ſenſe of ſcripture, the liberty of private judgment is allowed in all the latitude that is conſiſtent with the ends, or the very being of a religious ſociety. The right of judging, which it claims for itſelf, it extends to others alſo; compelling none to ſubmit to it's deciſions contrary to their own conviction, leaving thoſe, who think themſelves obliged to diſſent from it, to the free enjoyment of their own opinions, and treating them with all the benevolence, moderation and forbearance, which the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity inſpires*. Theſe principles at once vindicate the rectitude of a religious eſtabliſhment, and promote the ends of it's inſtitution.

It

* Blackſtone, Book IV. c. 4. "With regard to Proteſtant diſſenters, although the experience of their turbulent diſpoſition in former times occaſioned ſeveral diſabilities and reſtrictions to be laid upon them by abundance of ſtatutes (31 El. c. 1.—17 C. II. c. 2.—22 C. II. c. 1.) yet at length the legiſlature with a true ſpirit of magnanimity extended (by 1 W. & M. ſt. 2. c. 18. called the Toleration Act.) that indulgence to theſe ſectaries, which they themſelves, when in power, had held to be countenancing ſchiſm, and denied to the Church of England."

In the year 1648, the fanatical leaders of thoſe times, who had ſtrenuouſly claimed for themſelves the liberty of private judgment in matters of religion, made uſe of their power in paſſing an ordinance, dated May 2, 1648, by which they adjudged the defending of certain hereſies to be felony. It ordains, "that all perſons who ſhall willingly maintain, publiſh or defend, by preaching or writing, certain hereſies therein named, with obſtinacy, ſhall, upon complaint, and proof by the oaths of two witneſſes, before two juſtices of the peace, or confeſſion of the party, be committed to priſon, without bail or mainprize, till the next gaol delivery; and in caſe the indictment ſhall then be found, and the party upon his trial ſhall not abjure his ſaid error, and his defence and maintenance of the ſame, he ſhall ſuffer the pains of death, as in caſe of felony, without benefit of clergy; and if he recant or abjure, he ſhall remain in priſon till he find ſureties, that he will not maintain the ſaid hereſies or errors any more; but if he relapſe, and

It is therefore the duty of every Chriſtian, who would contribute to the advancement of true religion, it is the peculiar duty of the miniſters of the Goſpel, plainly to declare thoſe ends, by exhorting all men *to ſearch the ſcriptures*, by invariably applying to them as the teſt of what they advance, by confirming the evidences of their divine authority, and removing every difficulty that may diſcourage a free and impartial ſearch into the truths they contain: it is their duty to extend to religion the benefit of every improvement in learning and ſcience, by a proper application of the ſuperior advantages, which we now enjoy, of a more ſound philoſophy, more accurate rules of criticiſm, and more conſiſtent methods of interpretation than were formerly uſed. The more Chriſtianity has been publiſhed abroad, the more freely it has been examined, and the better mankind have been qualified to judge of it's excellence by the increaſe of learning and ſcience, the more amiable it has always appeared by the new lights which it has thereby received, and thoſe juſt and rational notions, which men have acquired of it's nature and end.

But

and is convicted a ſecond time, he ſhall ſuffer death as before." The ordinance alſo ſpecifies ſome other errors of leſs demerit, and ſays, "that whoſoever ſhall maintain or defend them, ſhall, upon conviction, be ordered to renounce them publickly, and, in caſe of refuſal, ſhall be committed to priſon, till he find ſureties that he ſhall not publiſh or maintain the ſaid errors any more." Theſe hereſies were taken from the ſpeeches or writings of the Papiſts, Armenians, Antinomians, Arians, Baptiſts, and Quakers, &c. of thoſe times.

By an ordinance in 1654, for ejecting ſcandalous miniſters, "Such miniſters and ſchoolmaſters ſhall be accounted ſcandalous in their lives and converſations, as ſhall maintain opinions puniſhable by the act againſt blaſphemy, &c. and ſuch as have frequently read or uſed the Common Prayer Book in public within that year, or ſhall at any time hereafter do the ſame." Neal's Hiſt. of the Puritans.

But the promotion of virtue and piety, the influence of the doctrines and motives of the Goſpel over the lives and actions of men, are the moſt certain and infallible marks of the rectitude and utility of a religious inſtitution. However men may differ about the means, as far as theſe ends are attained, ſo far the inſtitution undoubtedly coincides with the intention of the Author of our religion. Let it be our conſtant endeavour to preſerve this diſtinction, by exciting men to the practice of juſtice, fidelity, temperance, charity, and every good work; *following after the things which make for peace;* and engaging all parties, by moderation and forbearance, *by love unfeigned*, by the word of truth, to unite in that univerſal eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, which we are promiſed it ſhall in due time attain, when *the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our* LORD *and of his* CHRIST; when *the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in; and there ſhall be one fold, and one ſhepherd* *.

* Rev. xi. 15. Rom. xi. 25. John x. 16. (Sir I. Newton, on the Apocalypſe of St. John, ch. i.) "*In the days of the voice of the ſeventh angel, when he ſhall begin to ſound, the myſtery of God ſhall be finiſhed, as he hath declared to his ſervants the prophets: and then the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for ever.* (Apoc. x. 7. xi. 15.). There is already ſo much of the propheſy filled, that as many as will take pains in this ſtudy, may ſee ſufficient inſtances of GOD's providence: but then the ſignal revolution, predicted by all the Holy Prophets, will at once both turn men's eyes upon conſidering the predictions, and plainly interpret them. Till then, we muſt content ourſelves with interpreting what hath been already fulfilled." See Dan. ii. 44. and vii. 14. Ez. xxxvii. 21. 25.

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